

## Post 2008: Changing Face of Militancy in Kashmir

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### Abstract

*Militancy is the byproduct of British legacy in Jammu and Kashmir since 1947. But it grew unrelentingly during the late 1980s. The whole militant struggle has acquired a new shape and undergone a paradigm shift after the mass uprising of 2008. The present paper will examine the changing nature of militancy in Jammu and Kashmir after the 2008 mass uprising in Kashmir. This paper also analyzes the new faces of militancy which emerged after this mass agitation vis-à-vis incessant rise and participation of educationally conscious masses fighting a physical war against an ideologically mature nation.*

**Key Words:** Militancy, Kashmir, Separatism, Resistance and Freedom

### Introduction

The connection between education and militancy is disputable in academic discourses. In industrially advanced countries of Europe and North America militancy related activities are taken as a response to the inability of state to meet the mundane aspirations of people like employment, insurance and recreation<sup>1</sup>. But the states infected with ethnic and civil wars or identity issues of separatism, militant activities are oriented towards the realization of some 'imagined' higher objectives of national salvation and protection of identity. Naturally, in the former category of states, education works as an instrument of maintaining political stability and mainstreaming anti-state actors. In the later category of states where large

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majorities nurture some sense of alienation, real or perceived, education works more or less like a catalyst to militancy.

Militancy, in the popular jargon, is defined as the use of asymmetric political violence by weak non-state actors against sovereign nation-states for the realization of some political objectives. The ordinary masses normally make up a good percentage of the people who actually fight. But the educated youth, particularly unemployed, serve as the guiding forces. These educated militants are not only committed to their cause but also have the advantage of giving any resistance movement credibility in their societies. From Che Guevara in South America to Al Khattab in Chechnya to the present day Al Zawahiri of Al Qaeda, educated militants are not a rare breed.

The recent expression of concern by Omar Abdullah (Chief Minister of Kashmir) about the 'rise' in the number of educated militants in Kashmir makes it essential to put the whole issue in a perspective<sup>2</sup>.

How can Indian state cleanse Kashmiri soil from militancy when thousands of people, most of them educated youth, participate in the funeral processions of slain militants and reaffirm *their* faith in the mission of the deceased? The funeral of a militant (*shaheed* for the larger population) presents a scene of celebration and anger among educated youth, to be specific Celebration because people feel them the rightly guided empathic protectors of the imagined cause and bid them adieu with a sense of gratitude. Anger because it feels aggrieved and vows to avenge the heroic death until death. The scene pervades all over from playgrounds to facebook posts. The death of a couple of educated youth who have recently joined the militant ranks is neither a recent aberration nor an indication that militants are basically uneducated.

The involvement of educated youth in militancy is not new in Kashmir, there are thousands of examples of educated militants during its early phase. Syed Sallahudin, *Hizb* Chief, had done Masters Degree in political Science when he opted for the dangerous enterprise. Similarly Pilot Nadeem Quateeb<sup>3</sup>, Amar Khan, Mohammad Yousuf Waggay, Mohammad Yousuf Bhat, Arshid Hussain Dar (Khalid) Javeed Ramzaan Bhat and around three hundred people of Anantnag (*commonly known as Islamabad*) area alone who were consumed in early years of the struggle were educated above college level. If any single instance can be said to have ignited the armed militancy in the valley it should be rigging of 1988 elections. What followed was the revenge. The gun was picked up by almost every section of society responded to the common aspiration of 'freedom' from the Indian rule. In

fact it was fashionable those days to wield a weapon. Kashmiri nation was pushed towards the glorification of gun and its wielders. Apparently the state very tactically crushed the militancy in all parts of Jammu and Kashmir with the help of its strong espionage network and generously pumping money in the state to crush the sentiments one way or the other.

The unfinished business left by Pandit Nehru and Shiekh Abdullah and their successors was not only questioned but was challenged with vehemence. In the last decade when Mufti Sayeed took the reigns and Jagmohan was no more there as governor people did take some relief from state brutality of 1990's, army check posts and identification parades were less visible. People from the Kashmir particularly the youth got a chance to debate, discuss and analyse the overall historical situation of Kashmir<sup>4</sup>.

Former governor, S K Sinha's controversial decision of allotting 100 acres of forest land to Shri Amar Nath Shrine Board in 2008 added a new dimension to the otherwise allegedly *sponsored* militancy. New Delhi got the pulse of Kashmiri faith in Indian rule when millions of people took to streets against the Indian rule and shouted and raised anti-India and pro-freedom slogans<sup>5</sup>. The reigns were now held by local educated youth with good understanding of recent Kashmir history. The fires were yet to be doused when *Shopian double murder rape case* further alienated youth and provided impetus to the resistance camp. Kashmiri faith in Indian benevolence was shaken to its hilt when for more than four months the Valley remained under siege. Machil *fake encounter* and the killings of Wamiq Farooq (13 year old) and Tufail Ashraf Matto (17 years old) only aggravated the problem for the state. This period was commonly known as the '*Ragdoos Phase*' (*It is a new terminology and new practice used by the young angry youth against the State started since 2008. The name is derived from a practice called Ragda Ragda Bharat Ragda in which protesters organize themselves into a circle and rubbed the ground with their feet as a symbol to rub the national symbol and institutions of India*) in Kashmir. A parallel administration was run by Islamist leader Syed Geelani for more than six months.<sup>6</sup> The state could control the situation only with the use of heavy military machine. Stone pelting was guided by educated youth. Same was done to the leadership. Civil society and local media was coerced into silence.

Here again the mass participation of people in Lok Sabha elections was wrongly interpreted as the restoration of peoples' trust in the mainstream.

Introspection started quite later. The issues is now debated and discussed across different sections of people including civil society, politicians, and political analysts, within and outside Kashmir. The versions of the State, Center and Police are however different from each other. Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah blamed unemployment as the cause.

Interlocutors raised fingers towards their unimplemented report. Time and again the mainstream political parties of Jammu and Kashmir and intelligence agencies provide wrong information and sick analysis to the Center regarding the issue.

The notion at the grass root level stands changed. The resistance movement finds support among the educated youth who are not clamouring for white collar jobs but substantive demands of freedom and right to self determination. The period of 1990s is over when gun was discussed and debated insides the Shrines and Masjids among the ordinary people but today the same gun is discussed as an option among the highly qualified youth. It's debated and discussed in schools, colleges, universities etc.

In an informal way when I enquired the close friends of these Militants, they revealed that they were neither *fed up* with the system nor were they worried about the lack of employment opportunities. But instead of these, there main motivation for taking such steps is the historical background of Kashmir movement and attachment to the basic rights, *the Right to Self-determination*. The continuous denying of this basic right had deeply influenced their being devoted to the cause and this is deeply rooted as a trauma in their flesh and blood. Joining the armed struggle in the form of Militancy has been left as the only way to satisfy the sense of duty towards the Kashmiri nation in Kashmir<sup>7</sup>. Educated youth joining militancy signifies the failure of *Political Promises* made by late Pt Nehru and UNO to the people of Kashmir and they have let no scope for Kashmiris to believe in *Peaceful struggle* in the Kashmir. Really a matter of deep concern for those who value human beings and human aspirations without any discrimination based on the caste, colour, faith etc.

## References

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<sup>4</sup> Dar, Bashir Ahmad, *Split of All Parties Hurriyat Conference and emergence of Tehreek-i-Hurriyat*, Unpublished M.Phil Dissertation, Department Political Science, University of Kashmir, 2011.

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<sup>6</sup> Dar, Bashir Ahmad, *Split of All Parties Hurriyat Conference and Emergence of Tehreek-i-Hurriyat*, Unpublished M.Phil Dissertation, Department Political Science, University of Kashmir, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Open ended discussion and interview with the youth in the colleges.

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